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C O N F I D E N T I A L DUSHANBE 000798

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM TI

SUBJECT: TAJIK FM SAYS NDI DETENTION AN ISSUE FOR KAZAKHSTAN, NOT US

REF: Dushanbe 0781

CLASSIFIED BY: Richard Hoagland, Ambassador, US Embassy
Dushanbe, State.

REASON: 1.4 (b)

¶1. (C) Foreign Minister Tabak Nazarov told the Ambassador April 28 the allegations against detained National Democratic Institute (NDI) Acting Director Nurul Rahimbekov were too "shameful" to discuss, but the Embassy of Kazakhstan, not the United States, must handle the situation (reftel). In a 30-minute meeting at the opening of business, Nazarov noted that with the upcoming May 2-4 visit of President Rahmonov to Astana, the Tajik authorities did not want media attention on Rahimbekov's detention and expulsion. He agreed with the Ambassador's suggestion that innocent or guilty, the best solution would be for Rahimbekov to leave quietly on the next flight to Almaty, April 30.

¶2. (C) Referring to the allegations that Rahimbekov and a Kazakh friend may have paid for sex with two under-aged women in the NDI offices April 25, Nazarov let slip that he had refused to look at the "dirty" evidence when the Ministry of Security offered to show it to him, suggesting there was videotape or graphic photos. When the Ambassador specifically asked, "Is there a film?" Nazarov skirted the question. He observed Tajikistan had good relations with Kazakhstan and would certainly not jeopardize them without cause by "accusing" a Kazakhstani citizen. However, if there had been a previous complaint, it may have led to "increased surveillance" of Rahimbekov. He noted Rahimbekov had not cooperated with authorities. He then smiled and remarked, "All this trouble happens when people drink, they lose their balance. They want girls, they want to run around."

¶3. (C) Nazarov pointedly ignored the Ambassador's observations that the Ministry of Security had never stopped pressure against NDI, despite allowing Rahimbekov and former director Gegham Sargsyan to re-register and work for NDI in Tajikistan. The Ambassador noted that this kind of Soviet style KGB ploy had been used in Kazakhstan a few years ago against an outspoken opposition journalist, to international notoriety. Nazarov did not respond to the Ambassador's suggestion that the similarities in the current NDI case to a classic Soviet-style sting operation were too clear to ignore.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador noted that while no immediate decision had been made for the NDI office in Dushanbe, the United States must protect its interests and find new supervision for the NDI office. He asked that Nazarov work with him to facilitate this.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: We have given the lead to the Kazakh Embassy to get their citizen Rahimbekov out of town. The apparent existence of videotaped or photographic "evidence" all but

confirms this was classic entrapment. We know through other channels that the Ministry of Security is feeling especially celebratory and doing lots of high fives. We still do not know to what degree the Russian services played a role in this sordid episode. It will be essential for NDI to move quickly to replace Rahimbekov.

HOAGLAND